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**BRITISH PROPOSAL FOR RECTIFICATION OF THE
ANGLO-ITALIAN SOMALILAND BOUNDARY**

AT BENDER ZIADA

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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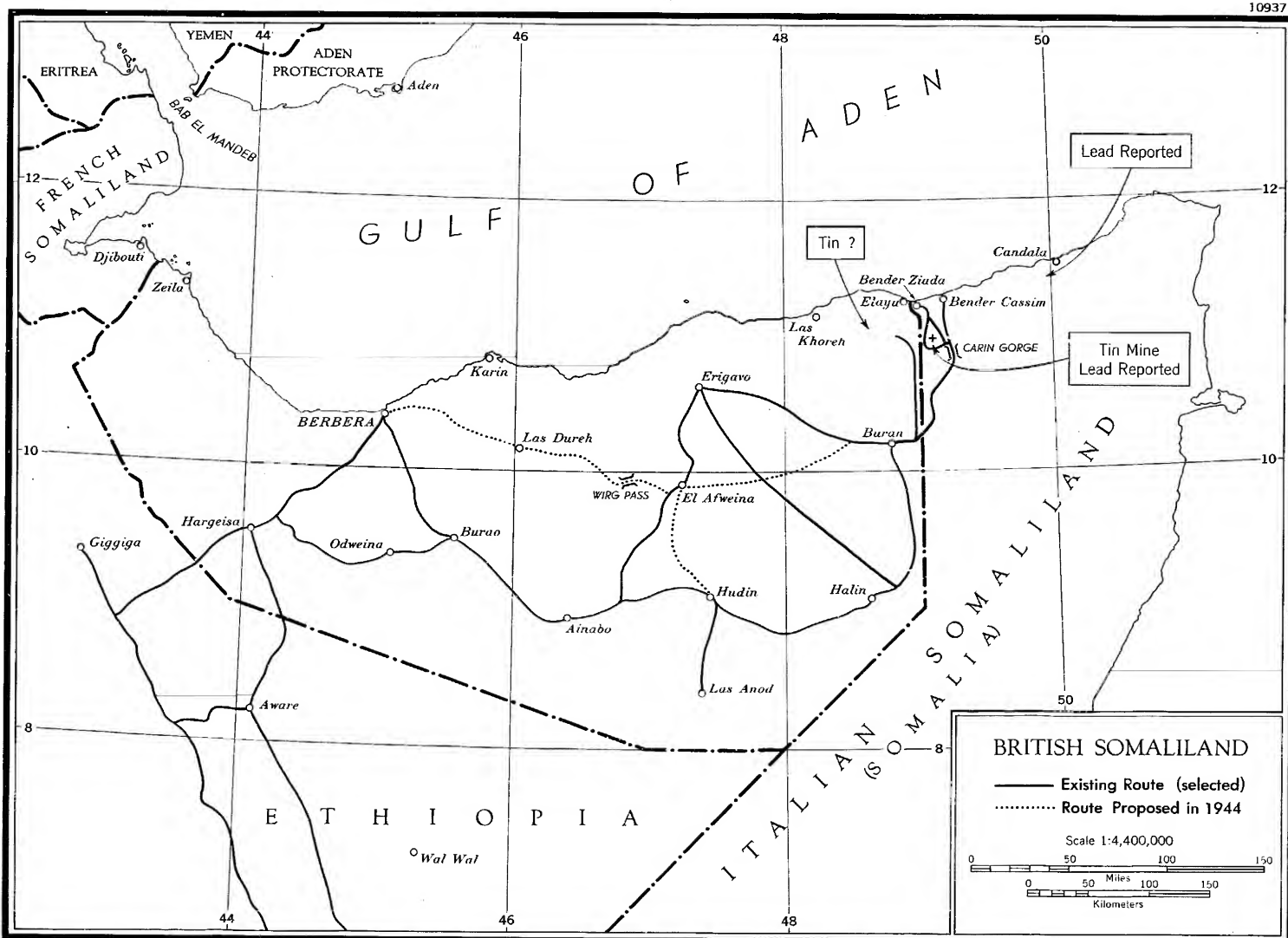
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**BRITISH PROPOSAL FOR RECTIFICATION OF THE ANGLO-
ITALIAN SOMALILAND BOUNDARY AT BENDER ZIADA**

SUMMARY

On 12 January 1948, the British Government presented a note to the Foreign Ministers' Deputies asking that consideration be given to a rectification of the present northeastern boundary of British Somaliland. This boundary now follows the meridian of 49° E. until it approaches the coast on the Gulf of Aden where it curves slightly to the west to exclude the coastal town of Bender Ziada from the British Protectorate. The British wish to straighten this line by extending the boundary due north to the coast, placing Bender Ziada in the Protectorate.

The British note points out that transportation difficulties between the coastal plain and the interior increase the cost of goods to the tribes and hinders the economic development of the hinterland. It is the belief of the British Government that these difficulties could be overcome by the proposed boundary rectification.

It is difficult to see how the possession of Bender Ziada would, in itself, improve transportation facilities enough to relieve the economic difficulties of the tribes. There may, however, be other motives for the British desire to include Bender Ziada in the Protectorate. The presence of a good potential landing point six miles west of Bender Ziada, for example an airport, and several forts at that town suggest possible British concern with the problem of military defense in the area. Although Bender Ziada is undeveloped as a port and lacks harbor facilities, the British may feel that it might serve as a potential outlet for developments in mining and the fishing industry along this coast.

NOTE: The Intelligence Organization of the Department of State, the Intelligence Division of the Department of the Army, and the Office of Naval Intelligence concur in the report; the Air Intelligence Division, Air Intelligence Directorate, Department of the Air Force, had no comment.

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BRITISH PROPOSAL FOR RECTIFICATION OF THE ANGLO-ITALIAN SOMALILAND BOUNDARY AT BENDER ZIADA

On January 12, 1948, the British Government presented a note to the Foreign Ministers' Deputies [redacted] asking that consideration be given to a rectification in the present northeastern boundary of British Somaliland, and requesting that the Four Power Commission of Investigation for the former Italian Colonies be instructed to study the question of the present boundary on the spot and present relevant data to the Deputies with a view to a solution of the problem. The eastern boundary of the British Somaliland Protectorate now follows the meridian of 49° E. from a point near Bender Ziada, on the Gulf of Aden coast, as far south as its intersection with the parallel 9° N, where it turns southwest. Near the coast in the north, the boundary curves around to the west leaving Bender Ziada, which is slightly west of 49° E, in Italian Somalia.¹ The British wish to straighten this line by extending the boundary due north to the coast along the 49th meridian, placing Bender Ziada in the Protectorate.

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The Protocol of May 5, 1894, between Great Britain and Italy provided that the boundary should follow the 49th meridian northward to the sea. When later observation determined that Bender Ziada was west of this meridian, contrary to the information available in 1894, a new Agreement was executed by the two powers on March 19, 1907, providing that Bender Ziada should remain Italian, in order to avoid difficulties between local tribes. In 1929-1930, a mixed boundary commission surveyed and demarcated most of the line laid down by the Protocol of 1894.

1. For convenience, British Somaliland will be referred to in this report as the Protectorate and Italian Somaliland as Somalia. Spelling of place names follows the International Map of the World, scale 1:1,000,000, Sheets NC 38 (E.A.F. No. 1115, 1942) and NC 39 (E.A.F. 1174, 1942) although these sometimes differ from spellings given in the British note and other British sources.

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The British memorandum of 1948 asserts that, when the question of Bender Ziada was considered by the commission in 1930, the Italians claimed more territory than was necessary to make Bender Ziada self-contained as regards water supply, etc. The Italians demanded possession of a settlement called Hais, some 5 miles south-southwest of Bender Ziada. Since this demand was not acceptable to the British, the boundary remained unmarked in the area. The agreement made by the boundary commission on other parts of the line (the Stafford-Cerulli Agreement) has never been confirmed by either government.

As the reason for desiring rectification of the boundary, the British note points out that the coastal plain of the Protectorate is cut off from the interior plateau by an escarpment parallel to the coast. This entails considerable hardship to the indigenous inhabitants of the interior, who must secure their imports by a roundabout route from Berbera via Burao or even Hargeisa to Erigavo and other points south of the coastal range. The coastal plain is, furthermore, the cold weather habitation of Warsangeleh (Warsangeli) and other plateau tribes.

The 1948 note maintains that the long transportation route increases the cost of goods to the tribes and hinders the economic development of the hinterland in their interest. It is the belief of the British Government that these difficulties could be overcome by a boundary rectification placing Bender Ziada within the Protectorate. If the rectification were made the British would attempt to come to an agreement with the successor authority in Somalia that would secure to the Protectorate Government the right to use for administrative and commercial purposes a suitable road around the escarpment to Bender Ziada via the Carin Gorge in Somalia.

Evaluation of the British Argument

It is difficult to see how the possession of Bender Ziada would, in itself, improve the transportation facilities enough to relieve the economic difficulties of the tribes. It is admitted by the British that an agreement for transit rights through Somalia

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would be desirable in addition to the cession of Bender Ziada. It appears that the agreement for transit rights, without the boundary rectification, would alone accomplish the stated aim.

It is understandable that the British should wish to remedy the transportation difficulties of the Protectorate in order to improve the economic position of the interior tribes and to increase the efficiency of their own administration. Overgrazing and wind erosion on the pasture lands of the British Somali tribes have assumed serious magnitude. The southward movement of a large part of the population is probable unless measures are undertaken for range management, soil conservation, water supply development, and better trading facilities to improve the livelihood of the tribes.

The existing roundabout route to the interior, which is referred to in the British note, is a motor road from Berbera to Burao, Ainabo, and Erigavo. This route involves a journey of about 300 miles to reach Erigavo, which lies only about 30 miles from the coast. At some seasons it is necessary to go by way of Hargeisa, in the western part of the Protectorate, which increases the distance considerably. Erigavo is the principal settlement in the administrative district of the same name, which covers all of the northeastern part of the Protectorate.

To the east of Erigavo a secondary road or motorable track makes another long detour by way of Buran to the Somalia port of Bender Cassim (Bosaso), crossing the coastal escarpment at the Carin Gorge in Somalia. From Carin an alternate road leads to Bender Ziada. The distance from Erigavo to Bender Cassim or to Bender Ziada is about 200 miles.

As part of the general development program for the Protectorate, the General Survey of British Somaliland proposed in 1944 that a new main road be constructed from Berbera to El Afweina, south of Erigavo, with branches to Erigavo, Las Anod, and perhaps to Buran. The Road would ascend to the interior from Berbera by way of Las Dureh and the Wirg

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Pass, the only natural route of importance across the mountains between Berbera and Carin Gorge. By avoiding the long southward loop to Ainabo, the new road would considerably shorten the distance between Berbera and Erigavo.¹ The eastern extension of this road from El Afweina to Buran would connect with the existing Bender Cassim-Buran route. The proposed road would serve a tribal population of about 160,000.

The northeastern coast of the Protectorate is inhabited by the Warsangeleh tribe. They are seafarers as well as nomads, their chief towns being Las Khoreh and Elayu on the coast. One of their principal sources of livelihood is the sale of frankincense gum in Aden, the proceeds of which go to purchase supplies of food and clothing. Their grazing grounds include practically all of the eastern part of the Protectorate and adjacent sections of Somalia.² Bender Ziada lies on the rather indefinite border between the Warsangeleh and the Mijertein, a tribe living primarily in Somalia.

According to the Somaliland Survey, the Warsangeleh will probably continue to transport part of their supplies by camel from their dhows on the coast. However, their own small ports (Las Khoreh, Elayu, and others), being cut off from the interior pastures of the tribe, are overshadowed in importance by Bender Cassim, which has access to the plateau through the Carin Gorge. Bender Ziada is not even mentioned in the Survey Report of 1944.

The British request of 1948 states that the construction and maintenance of a road into the interior across the escarpment

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1. Somaliland Protectorate, Military Government, Report on General Survey of British Somaliland, 1944 (Colonial Development and Welfare Act, Economic Survey and Reconnaissance), 19 May 1945, 12 pp. maps, and graphs.
 2. Military Government of British Somaliland, British Somaliland and its Tribes, January 1945, 16 pp., charts.

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would be excessively difficult and that the cost would be prohibitive. This is probably true, but the Protectorate authorities thought in 1944 that the proposed road from Berbera by way of the Wirg Pass could be constructed and maintained for a reasonable sum. This road, with its eastward connection with Bender Cassim, would leave much to be desired in the way of direct access to the coast, but it would shorten the present distance. It is difficult to understand how development of Bender Ziada as an alternate terminus to Bender Cassim could improve the situation much. If this new road were built, and if an agreement were made with the Somalia authorities allowing transit to and use of Bender Ziada and Bender Cassim by the inhabitants of the Protectorate, it seems that outright cession of Bender Ziada would be unnecessary for transportation reasons.

Other Possible Motives for the British Request

There may have been other motives for the British desire to include Bender Ziada in the Protectorate.

(1) Certain factors of defense suggest that the British request may have been partly based on military considerations. One of the best potential landing points of this coastal area is located six miles west of Bender Ziada and would be placed within the Protectorate by the proposed boundary rectification. (The best, at Bender Cassim, would remain to the east of the Protectorate.) Furthermore, there are three conspicuous forts and an airdrome located at Bender Ziada.

(2) It is probable that the coastal strip contains deposits of tin, lead or other minerals and if these are developed Bender Ziada would be well situated to serve as a port for part of the area. The British have designated the coast from Karin (east of Berbera) to Bender Ziada, and from Bender Cassim some 50 miles eastward to Candala as a "potential mineral belt." The Italians had a tin mine at Manja Yihin, near 11° 5' N., 49° 1' E (Magio Yihan on East Africa, 1:500,000, Sheet NC 39/1. GSGS4355, 1946). This place is just east of the

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border and inland from Bender Ziada about 20 or 25 miles by road. Bender Ziada might be the logical port for this mine, but even if the boundary were rectified as proposed by the British, the mine itself would presumably still lie within Somalia. Lead is reported in the same area and was found by the Italians at Candala. Deposits of lignite and possibly gold are reported in the coastal area of the Protectorate. There is a possible tin locality near Las Bar, in the Protectorate about 30 miles southwest of Bender Ziada.

(3) In 1944, it was recommended that the fish canning industry be reconstituted as soon as possible and that if necessary the existing Italian firm be encouraged to extend its activities to the Protectorate coast. Other phases of a potential fishing industry were to be examined. Perhaps Bender Ziada might be of some value to the British in this connection.

In regard to points (2) and (3) it should be observed that Bender Ziada appears to be undeveloped as a port. In 1943 the village was reported as containing about 500 inhabitants, and it lacked harbor facilities. Only indifferent anchorage could be obtained at a distance of about one mile or more from shore.¹ A great deal of work would be necessary to develop a port here.

(4) The British Government may also desire to take this opportunity to settle in its favor a minor boundary dispute of long standing to prevent its recurrence in the future if the area should increase in economic importance.

1. U.S. Navy Hydrographic Office, Sailing Directions for the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden. H.O. No. 157, 1943, 506 pp., illus, p. 461.

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